

WAME Alert!

*This is a WAME Alert! The **Wisconsin Advocates for Music Education** will email timely and important music education information on a monthly basis to keep you informed and involved. If you have ideas to contribute, please email Rich Mannisto, WAME Chair: rmannisto@aol.com.*

Preparing for Music In Our Schools Month

In just a couple of weeks, it will be time to celebrate "Music In Our Schools Month" (MIOSM). In celebration of MIOSM, the Wisconsin Music Educators Association coordinates Capitol Concerts -- a series of student performances held at the State Capitol. Seeing enthusiastic students perform, especially young musicians, often lights up the faces of many people, including state politicians who work in the State Capitol Building.

Some may wonder, "after the politicians see music education in action, how is it that government consistently under-funds arts programs?" There is no simple answer. However, people need to be reminded of the value of music education, and MIOSM is a great opportunity to focus on the importance of music advocacy for music education. The benefits of music education are substantial. The positive influence that music education has on youth and society is magnificent. On that note, it is an excellent time to put music advocacy tools to use and contact school superintendents, administrators, and local and state politicians to reiterate the VALUE of MUSIC EDUCATION.

Bob Morrison, long-time music advocate and founder of the Music for All Foundation, made this statement about the challenges facing music education: "During this period of unprecedented cutbacks (due to the poor economy and new testing mandates) it is now more important than ever that policy-makers know that there is an army of concerned citizens out there who support music and arts education and will be watching their actions closely. Reward those who support the music and arts programs. Remember those who do not."

Up-to-date news, tools and information about music and arts education advocacy can be found on Morrison's web site, www.Music-for-all.org and other sites, such as www.supportmusic.com, www.vh1.com/partners/save_the_music/home.html and www.amc-music.org. Also, be sure to visit www.wmea.com/support/index.html for a list of advocacy links and other helpful information.

Getting Involved

You may be wondering, "How can I get involved?" It's easy! Just by taking the time to do at least one of the following, you will help raise awareness of the importance of music education.

After attending a concert or music festival:

- Call and thank your school principal, school board member, or administrator for providing a great music educational opportunity to students.
- Write a letter regarding the above to the same people.
- Write a note of thanks on the program you received at the band or orchestra concert and give it to the school principal, administrator, or a school board member.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about the music event you attended and its positive affect on students' growth.
- Figure out who your local political representatives are and do any of the above.

When the month of March concludes, so will MIOSM. While better Wisconsin weather will be on the way, stormy weather will also be a head in regards to state and local budget crunches affecting school music programs throughout the state. Continuing a proactive approach to advocating for music education and communicating with local, state, and national officials about the VALUE of MUSIC EDUCATION will help maintain (and hopefully restore) music education budgets for the 2004-2005 school year and beyond.

Thank you for your support of music education. Please be proactive NOW and advocate for continued quality in music education!